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NATIONAL CONVENTION.

R E P O R T

ON THE

ORGANIZATION

OF

NATIONAL SCHOOLS:

TO COMPLETE A

REPUBLICAN EDUCATION.

MADE IN THE NAME OF THE COMMITTEE

OF

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

THE 24th GERMINAL, SECOND YEAR OF THE REPUBLIC.

[APRIL 13, 1794.]

By BOUQUIER.

[Translated from an authentic original]

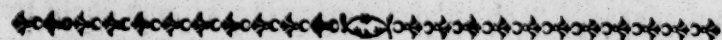
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R E P O R T

ON THE

ORGANIZATION

OF

NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

IN consecrating the liberty of teaching, the National Convention hath paid homage to the unalienable rights of man. The Convention was to open prolific sources of instruction, sources whose salubrious waters might be pure like nature, transcendent like liberty, sweet like equality. How could it better fulfil this duty than by calling to the honorable functions of teachers, the citizens of both sexes, who, by their civism and good morals, have merited the confidence of the people? It throws open a free career of teaching; could it employ vaster, grander, or more efficacious means of diffusing instruction over the whole surface of the Republic? In organizing, by the law of the 29th Frimaire, the mode of imparting such rudiments of knowledge as children are susceptible of, and which, being matured, must form true republicans, citizens useful to their country, the Convention hath fulfilled only a part of its task relative to instruction: it hath still to procure to youth the means of perfecting those primary elements, and of acquiring notions relative to the organisation of democratic government, which the people have adopted with so much enthusiasm, and which they defend with so much strength, energy, courage, and intrepidity. Instruction hath appeared to us susceptible of being considered only under two heads; the knowledge indispensable to citizens, and the acquirements useful to society. The idea of establishing secondary or intermediate schools, consecrated to the teaching of the laws and I know not for what other sciences, for which it seems that the learned of the ancient regimen still retain a particular affection, has already been several

times offered. Such an idea, emanating without doubt from the brain of some heretofore professor of an university, hath appeared to us, to say no more of it, subversive of republican institutions which ought to be founded on the simplicity of nature. To urge such a proposal is nothing less than to endeavour to revive those Gothic establishments, where immoral youths lost their precious time in loading their brain with knowledge always futile and often fallacious, which they were forced to forget, when their interest or taste inspired them with a desire of attaining useful acquirements. It is to endeavour to organize new academic bodies, to establish new haunts of literati, where speculative egotists may once more *insulate* themselves from society with impunity and nourish *pedagogical* aristocracy, no less mischievous than that of arbitrary power, birth, and riches. To propose the establishment of professors of law, is to wish to revive chicane and all its train, which reason, philosophy and liberty have felled to the ground with their three-fold mace: It is to attempt to create a Sorbonne of jurists, whose doctors furred or unfurred would soon contrive to substitute their heteroclite opinions instead of the laws. It is to endeavour to abandon the people anew to the rapacity of the ci-devant attorneys and solicitors who would not fail to enroll themselves in that new *Bazouche**, there to recommence under the *Egis* of the law, the spoliation of their ill-fated clients.

Citizens, the revolution hath penetrated into the very bowels of the earth to extract from thence salt-petre. Shall walls of colleges, universities, academies check its rapid progress? No. They will fall before it, while it penetrates into those haunts of inverted reason, driving thence immorality, error, falsehood, superstition, ignorance and pride; it will overturn those pulpits in which interest audaciously professed the baleful art of chicane, under the pompous title of, *Science of the laws*.

The laws must be simple, clear, and few in number, so that every citizen may carry them about with him. Hence, far from establishing schools of law, the National Convention ought to prohibit, under severe penalties, all manner of paraphrase, interpretation, or commentary. The popular societies, now constantly occupied in counteracting the

* A company of subaltern lawyers in Paris.

schemes of the coalesced tyrants, in defeating their plots, in watching the disaffected, in hunting down knavery, in denouncing conspirators ; the popular societies, I say, when the torrent of the revolution shall have swallowed the enemies of liberty, being no longer in permanent vigilance, will, in the bosom of peace, turn their attention to the study of the laws, the sciences, and the arts. Then will they become true republican Lyceums for youth, where the human mind will perfect itself in all kinds of arts and sciences. Let us then forward the establishment of popular societies in the communes, where, either from some local impediment, or for want of pecuniary means, such societies have not yet been formed. Fanaticism had a temple in each of those communes,—let them become the temples of liberty, consecrated to instruction, and to the propagation of republican laws and morals. Decree that the edifices of superstition already abandoned, and those to be abandoned hereafter, belong to the communes ; and by that decree, you will have contributed much towards public instruction. It is not morals that make government, but government that makes morals. This truth, long acknowledged, is evinced anew by the effects of the revolution, and by the prodigious height to which the republican government which you have decreed, and which the French people have consecrated by their sanction, hath all of a sudden elevated the public mind. Egotism, the natural child of monarchy had, under the reign of tyrants, *insulaed* all the citizens : individual interest was the supreme regulator of their actions. Hardly had you laid on the ruins of the throne of despotism, and on the tomb of the last of our tyrants the basis of democratic government, when the flambeau of reason and philosophy illumed all the points of the surface of the Republic ; ignorance absconded in gloomy caverns, fanaticism disappeared, error fled before truth. Frenchmen, inhabiting the same commune, lived in reciprocal ignorance of their political, and even physical existence, the *tocsin* of the revolution resounds in their ears, it awakens in their minds the sentiments of liberty, impresses on them the necessity of uniting to overcome the tyrants, and in the twinkling of an eye twenty-five millions of *insulaed* egotists are united into an immense family of brethren and friends. It is by constant intercourse and an uninterrupted communication

of ideas, that the minds of men are enlightened, their souls are elevated, and heroic virtues are displayed.

Is it from our gothic schools, in which doctors in square caps taught no other science but that of obscurity and perplexing reason by ratiocination, of substituting to the simple ideas which arise from the contemplation of nature, ideas metaphysico-mystic; is it from such schools that sprung that patriotic fire which prompts citizens to deprive themselves of their very necessities to succour the Republic? Is it in those schools that our fair citizens have learned to make a sacrifice of their jewels and modish trinkets to supply the wants of the defenders of liberty? Is it in those schools that they have learned that virtue is the richest and most beautiful ornament of their sex? Is it in the dens of *Atque's* and *Ergo's* that a host of heroes, who died in battle, had learned to abhor tyrants, to adore liberty, and to die for their country? Is it, in a word, in those antres that young BARRA imbibed that heroic courage which, in rendering him the eternal pattern of republican youths, conducted him to the Pantheon? No: the germin of those sublime virtues was in the heart of those generous heroes, and the enthusiasm of liberty could alone make them shoot forth.

The real schools of republican virtues, morals, and laws, are the popular societies, the assemblies of sections, the decadary feasts, the national and local festivals, the civic banquets and the theatres. It is there that youths will acquire, as it were without toil, the knowledge of their rights and of their duties, there they will imbibe sentiments fit to elevate their minds to the altitude of republican virtues: it is there they will learn that it is great and glorious to devote themselves for the safety of their country, that it is sublime to die for it. During the course of our revolution the society of Jacobins of Paris hath alone produced more heroism, more virtue, than all the scientific establishments in Europe have displayed during many ages. By your law of the 29th Frimaire, you have discharged your obligations towards the citizens by placing within the reach of every one the instruction necessary to all; there now remains to you only to organise the teaching of the sciences necessary to society. The intent of this institution is to find at all times citizens sufficiently instructed to exercise the various functions relative to the safety and welfare of

society, and to the common interest of the Republic. You will attain this end by establishing at the expence of the nation able institutors whose patriotic zeal may propagate with republican activity, the art of administering comfort to suffering humanity, to the defenders of the country wounded in battle, in exterminating the monsters who strive to devour liberty ; to the animals which man has rendered the companions of his painful labours, and whose services are inestimable ; the art of keeping in a respectable state of defence the frontiers of the Republic, of repulsing the enemy, by discharging on their mercenary cohorts the thunder of freemen ; the science of keeping in repair our roads, canals, and bridges, and of opening communications necessary for the operations of our commerce ; the art of perfecting navigation, and of rendering formidable the navy of the Republic ; the art, in fine, of working mines, of extracting metals from the bosom of the earth, and of employing them in supplying the wants of the people and in the defence of their sovereignty. These establishments must be placed according to the different indications of nature.

It is not on the *Puy-de-dome* that hydrographers are to be stationed, nor is the art of defending, attacking, and fortifying a place to be taught on the heaths of the *Landes*. It is not in the desert countries that institutors of health, and farriers are to be settled. If it be objected that in thus restricting to certain communes the gratuitous institution of sciences useful to society, those sciences would not be within the attainment of all—we answer, nor ought they so to be. Is it the duty of the Republic to afford at their own expence to each individual an institution, the benefit of which may furnish to those who procure it to themselves, private means of attaining to places, or of aggrandizing their fortune by the exercise of their talents ? No, doubtless ; the Republic, we repeat it, owes to her children only the gratuitous instruction of sciences which are necessary to them for exercising the rights and discharging the duties of citizens. In diffusing over the whole extent of the territory the gratuitous instruction of the sciences, the French Republic alone have done more than all the free states whose laws, manners, and customs are handed down to us in history. Greece, which carried the sciences, and especially the arts, to so high a degree of perfection, never

paid a public salary for instruction; and yet Greece produced a multitude of learned men and artists, who do honor to their country and to the time in which they lived, and have merited the acknowledgements of posterity, to whom they have long served as models.

In placing, then, within the attainment of all, the instruction necessary to all, the Republic hath discharged her debt towards her children; in proclaiming the liberty of teaching all kinds of sciences and arts, she hath procured to all abundant means of indulging their different inclinations; moreover, the project of decree which we present to you, contains dispositions favorable to the citizens to whom nature, in lieu of riches, hath dispensed that happy aptitude which smoothes the paths of science, and which almost invariably discriminates the favorites of Minerva from the slaves of Plutus. We therefore conceive that it is expedient to establish the institution of the various sciences useful to society, in those communes of the Republic, which from their situation are most likely to accelerate their progress. The institutors of health are to be settled near the *hospitia*, or houses of beneficence, in the large communes of the Republic. The military science, the art of mining and gunnery, is to be taught in fortified places. It is in maritime places that hydrographers are to give lessons proper for forming mariners and perfecting navigation. In fine, in the most populous communes of the Republic must be established general means for the propagation of those arts and sciences whose cultivation, though not absolutely necessary to society, contributes to the lustre, brilliancy, and splendour of government.

From these considerations, drawn from nature, relative to the teaching of sciences necessary to society, your committee of public instruction hath charged me to present to you the following project of decree.

The reporter reads a project of decree, of which the following are the dispositions :

SECTION I.

The means of propagating instruction.

ART. I. The meeting of the citizens in assemblies of communes, of sections, and in popular societies, the theatres,

the civic games, the military evolutions, the national and local feasts, constitute a part of the last degree of public instruction.

ART. 2. To facilitate the meeting of citizens in popular societies, the celebration of national and local feasts, the execution of civic games, of military evolutions, and the representation of patriotic dramatic pieces, the Convention declares that the churches, the ci-devant parsonage houses, at present abandoned, and those which shall be abandoned in future, belong to the communes. It charges its committee of instruction to make choice of the elementary books extant, of the different sciences and arts which are to contribute to the perfection of public instruction, and to accelerate, by means of competition, the publication of such as are wanting.

SECTION II.

Of the Sciences and Arts to be taught at the expence of the Republic.

ART. 1. In each of the communes of Lille, Metz, Strasbourg, Besançon, Bourges, Montpellier, Toulouse, Bourdeaux, and Brest, shall be established seven Institutors of Health, who shall be bound to give public lectures in the French language: 1st. In Anatomy and Physiology; 2d. in Botany and Materia Medica; 3d. in Chemistry and Pharmacy; 4th. in Surgery; 5th. in Midwifery and the diseases incident to women and children; 6th. in Pathology Therapeutic; 7th. in Clinick Medicine.

ART. 2. This establishment shall be double for the commune of Paris.

ART. 3. There shall moreover be in that commune, near each public edifice appropriated to the treatment of the diseases of children, of those of men of alienated minds, and to the treatment of venereal diseases, an officer of health, charged to communicate to the pupils the result of all his observations on all that can conduce to the solace of humanity under those afflictions.

ART. 4. Independently of the institutors of farriery, at present in activity, one shall be appointed in each of the

following communes : Arras, Nanci, Dijon, Poitiers, Avignon, Aurillac, Tonlouse, Bourdeaux, Rennes, Caen.

ART. 5. There shall be appointed an institutor of fortifications and mines, and one of gunnery in each of the following strong holds of the Republic : Lille, Metz, Strasbourg, Besancon, Port-la-Montagne, Perpignan, Bayonne, Brest, Paris.

ART. 6. Those military institutors shall publicly teach the sciences necessary for forming engineers, miners, and artillerymen agreeably to the elementary books to be delivered to them for that purpose.

ART. 7. The part of fortification relative to bridges and causeways shall be taught only at Paris : three instructors shall be appointed to that part of instruction.

ART. 8. Four observatories shall be established in the Republic ; the first at Paris, to which four astronomers shall be appointed ; the second at Strasbourg, the third at Brest, the fourth at Marseilles. Two astronomers shall be appointed to each of these three observatories.

ART. 9. The astronomers of the Republic are bound to form pupils for astronomical and meteorological observations, for calculations of the knowledge of time and other operations tending to improve navigation.

ART. 10. In every port of the Republic shall be a Hydrographer, who shall publicly teach the sciences necessary for mariners.

ART. 11. In the commune of Paris shall be established an institution of Minerallogy and Metallurgy.

ART. 12. The commission charged with the foreign intercourse of the Republic shall be bound to maintain with each of its agents in the Asiatic countries four youths, designed to acquire a knowledge of the languages of those countries.

ART. 13. The different institutors above mentioned, as appointed to the last stage of instruction, shall receive salaries from the Republic.

ART. 14. Children who may have very apparent dispositions for any art or science, the teaching of which is, or is not, paid for by the Republic, without their being able in either case to avail themselves of it, if their parents be found by the council general of their commune unable to af-

ford the expence of their instruction, shall obtain for three years only a succour of encouragement to be delivered to them year by year according to the mode and on the conditions specified in one of the sections hereafter.

SECTION III.

Of the choice of the Institutors of the Sciences and Arts, the teaching of which is paid for by the Republic.

ART. 1. The institutors of the sciences and arts, the teaching of which is paid for by the Republic, shall be chosen by juries.

ART. 2. The juries shall be composed each of forty members.

Their formation shall be made publicly.

ART. 3. The jury to whom shall be confided the choice of institutors of health, of farriery, of minerallogy, of metallurgy, and of hydrography shall be formed by the relative plurality of voices, by the administrators of the districts in conjunction with the citizens of the communes where those establishments shall be fixed.

ART. 4. The engineers, miners, and gunners of all ranks, in garrison in the strong-holds of the Republic, where are to be established the institutors of the sciences relative to fortification, mining, and gunnery, shall form, by the relative plurality of voices, the jury which is to choose them.

ART. 5. The juries shall make their elections publicly and by absolute majority. They shall give their votes aloud.

ART. 6. A duplicate shall be made of the process verbal of the election; one copy shall be deposited in the secretary's office of the municipality, the other sent to the commission of public instruction.

ART. 7. The instrument of the process verbal of the election shall be the title of the institutor elected.

ART. 8. The commission of instruction on the denunciations which may be made to it against one or several of the above institutors, after having verified the facts, shall order them, if cause be found, to be replaced by election, conformably to the present decree.

ART. 9. The four astronomers at present in office at the observatory of the Republic at Paris, are continued as observators and astronomical institutors.

ART. 10. On the presentation of the committee of public instruction, the national representation shall appoint the six astronomers to be established in the observatories, designed by article the 8th, section 2.

SECTION IV.

General Means of Instruction.

ART. 1. Independently of the establishments appointed by the decree of the 3d Pluviose, in the grand communes of the Republic there shall be a library and a cabinet of instruments for physical experiments, for each section of population of fifty thousand souls. There shall moreover be near each hospitium or house of beneficence a garden appropriated to the culture of the usual plants.

ART. 2. These gardens shall be open to the public. The council general of the commune shall determine the mode of publicity.

ART. 3. The citizens who cultivate any art or science relative to those establishments shall be admitted every day.

ART. 4. Such citizens as may desire to open courses of experimental physic, or of natural history, and may not be furnished with objects and instruments for that effect, may, on their responsibility, and with the consent of the council general of the commune, give their lectures publicly in the national cabinets.

ART. 5. Those national establishments are under the immediate inspection of the municipalities.

ART. 6. To each of them shall be appointed one or more wardens at the expence of the Republic.

ART. 7. These wardens shall be elected conformably to art. 3. sec. 3.

ART. 8. They shall be charged on their responsibility with the preservation of the objects committed to their care, under pain of being prosecuted as dilapidators of the public treasure.

[The 5th and 6th sections are relative to rewards, and to the salaries of the institutors, and as being less interesting are omitted here.]



